Power Probe Told:

Concessions 'Unfair' To Older Customers

* * *

B.C. Power Commission can't offer lower rates for bulk power to attract new industry for Vancouver Island "in fairness" to existing customers, the Shrum royal commission was told yesterday.

CHARLES W. NASH
... big, bulk contracts out

Charles W. Nash, load development director, said location on Vancouver Island has certain advantages for some chemical industries, and for steel and copper smelting.

"But electric power is not presently available at prices these industries will pay," he said.

Mr. Nash's report dealt with sale of bulk power to industry. The Royal Commission probing operations of the Power Commission was told:

1. At present time a surplus of power is generated by the Power Commission.

2. This surplus isn't sufficient to undertake a large-scale bulk contract, at a low price.

3. In the first eight months of 1958 bulk sales went into the black, but additional capital costs are expected to wipe out this $128,224 profit.

Long-Term Pacts Burden

4. Low cost 20-year contracts at fixed price signed with pulp mills during early years of development of Vancouver Island system, by 1957 "had become a burden to the commission."

5. New contracts since January, 1955, have provision for price changes at stated intervals, in accordance with prevailing costs of power.

6. Bulk sales make possible generation and transmission facilities on a scale that would be otherwise impossible.

Royal Commission chairman Dr. Gordon M. Shrum asked if the rate structure was so rigid that the Power Commission could not give price concessions on power to allow an industry to get started.

There is nothing to bar price concessions, said Mr. Nash. They were found to be expedient in several cases in the past, to build up the load.

"But we don't want to," he said. "It wouldn't be fair to our other customers."

He cited the case of an American chemical company which wanted to locate a new plant near Crofton. Pennsalt Chemicals Corporation made application in 1955 for a block of power at cost of three mills.

Lower Price Refused

The deal fell through a few months ago when the power commission refused to lower its price of about six mills—the same price as was being contracted for by pulp mills on Vancouver Island. The company said it could not compete with rival firms located on the mainland unless it could get cheap power.

During the morning session, the Shrum commission heard further testimony by financial director Ian R. Mills.

He said Vancouver Island customers of the power commission are subsidizing its users in virtually every other section of the province.

During the eight months up to Nov. 30, the commission had a total operating surplus of $876,046 on Vancouver Island. However, during the same period, it lost $453,779 in its operations on the mainland.

Four Island districts provided most of the operation surplus: Albernis, $198,251; Comox Valley-Campbell River, $153,539; Duncan, $124,479; Nanaimo, $271,553.

Ottawa 'Easing' Me Out

OTTAWA (CP) — Dr. Jacques Rousseau last month relieved of administrative duties as director of the National Museum's human history branch, said Thursday he is being fired from the public service.

"I've received no formal dismissal notice, but the government has made things so uncomfortable and uncertain for me, it is obvious they are easing me out," he said.

Dr. Rousseau, 53, was relieved of his post following an inquiry into serious unrest among senior scientific personnel in the museum branch.

Ottawa Reports

No Extension For Federal Winter Help

OTTAWA (CP)—There is no reason at present to consider an extension of the winter works program past the April 30 deadline, Labor Minister Starr said yesterday.

He said that from the response of the provinces and municipalities to the incentive program, there is no reason for considering an extension of the five-month program until May 31.

Mr. Starr was replying in the Commons to Paul Hellyer (L, Toronto Trinity) who asked whether the government would consider an extension requested by the Toronto Metropolitan Council.

* * *

Canada has agreed to provide India with $17,000,000 worth of essential commodities and equipment to maintain that country's economic development program, External Affairs Minister Smith announced.

The agreement arises out of discussions with India on ways of helping her out of her currency difficulties.

The $17,000,000 will come out of the $35,000,000 Colombo Plan appropriation voted by Parliament for the fiscal year that ends March 31.

* * *

A Quebec Conservative charged Friday that the CBC is spending money extravagantly for such things as filmed television interviews of literary figures living on the Riviera.

Louis Joseph Pigeon (PC, Joliette - L'Assomption - Montcalm) said that despite parliamentary grants totalling more than $41,000,000 in 1957-58 the publicly-owned CBC had a deficit of almost $5,000,000.

* * *

Federal loans and gifts and a more selective overseas market helped boost Canada's wheat exports in the last crop year to a five-year high of 316,073,495 bushels, the Canadian wheat board said in its annual report made public Friday.

* * *

Canada's huge trade deficit with the United States was slashed to a four-year low of $276,600,000 in 1958 as Canadians reduced their cross-border shopping while maintaining a hefty flow of exports.

The year's pattern of trade also shifted slightly, with Canada selling more and buying more from Britain and at the same time boosting the Canadian surplus in overseas trade.

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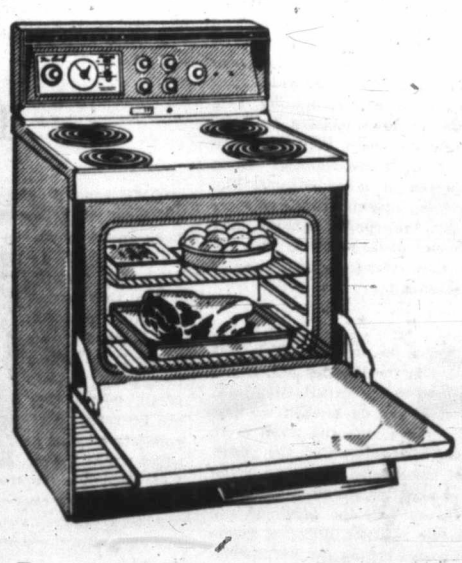
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